PETRARCH.

HOW HE ASSISTED THE GROWTH OF MODERN SCHOLARSHIP.

PETRARCH. THE FIRST MODERN SCHOLAR AND MAN OF LETTERS. A Selection from his Correspondence with Boccaccio and other Friends, Designed to Illustrate the Beginnings of the Renaissance. Translated from the Original Latin, together with Historical Introductions and Notes. By James Harvey Robinson, Professor of History in Columbia University. With the Collaboration of Henry Winchester Rolfe, Sometime Professor of Latin in Swarthmore College. Octavo, pp. x, 435. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

The authors of this book have produced a very useful and readable monograph on a man who is, after all, little more than a name to thousands of readers not special students of his time. It promises to be, paradoxically, the more useful because it is less a set biography of Petrarch than a study of his place in the development of modern scholarship. M. de Nolhac, in his "Petrarque et l'Humanisme," has written perhaps the most fascinating book on the subject; but Professor Robinson and Professor Rolfe are the first to give in popular English form the data needed for an estimate of their hero's liberalizing influence at a time when such an influence was sorely wanted. The Renaissance, which means so many things, meant, first and last, a way of looking at life, letters and art. Petrarch, one of its earliest forerunners, was such largely by virtue of his outlook, his general turn of mind. If the intrinsic merits of his works, even of the "Canzoniere," are set aside, there is still left a noble residuum of free thought, one of the first contributions toward the liberation of men's minds from the ignorance and prejudice of the Middle Ages. His works were not more important than was his point of view.

This element in his history has to be disengaged with great care from a mass of seeming contradictions. Among the latter we find one that is particularly suggestive of the reactionary feeling from which Petrarch was essentially free. Writing to Boccaccio in protest against the current belief that he undervalued the work of Dante, he affirms that he delights in both the thought and style of that poet, but, he adds: "It is true that I have sometimes said to those who wished to know precisely what I thought that his style was unequal, for he rises to a higher plane of excellence in the vernacular than in poetry and prose." This passage shows clearly his indisposition to share in the development of Italian as a literary instrument—one of the chief triumphs of the Renaissance in the Peninsula, despite its classical tendencies. For him, as our authors point out in a footnote, "prose and verse could only be Latin." His hatred of his mother tongue was deep rooted and permanent. He seems never to have quite forgiven himself for the sonnets to Laura, as much because they were written in the vernacular as because of their commemoration of a possibly unworthy passion. Italian was the language of taverns and the street. When he heard his own writings, Dante's and Boccaccio's, murdered on the lips of the uneducated, he recoiled with horror from the idea of moulding the familiar speech of his countrymen to the purposes of high contemplation. His distaste went to the bottom. Not only his native language, but the life of his native land repelled him. "Among the many subjects which interested me," he says in a precious autobiographical fragment, "I dwelt especially upon antiquity, for our own age has always repelled me, so that, had it not been for the love of those dear to me, I should have preferred to have been born in any other period than our own. In order to forget my own time, I have constantly striven to place myself in spirit in other ages."

Thus we perceive how easy it would be to identify Petrarch with the mediæval pedants, whose ministrations were still of vast account in the Italy of his day. Out of his own mouth he is convicted of standing aloof from the great task into which Dante and Boccaccio, writing their masterpieces in the language of the people, had thrown themselves with unerring foresight and splendid generosity. How is the indictment against the usefulness of his labors to be removed? By recognizing that quality to which our authors allude in explaining his passionate love for Cicero and Virgil, his "delight in the free play of the mind among ideas that are stimulating and beautiful." This delight, aptly described in the book before us as "the fundamental humanistic impulse," was, indeed, the thing that separated Petrarch from the deadening traditions of the monkish régime and set him in the van of modern letters. Perhaps, if he had so far emulated his beloved Cicero as to treat of familiar things in the body of his correspondence, instead of disdainfully relegating all such matters to humble postscripts, the humanistic lines in the portrait he unconsciously draws of himself might have been strengthened. We have lost all these postscripts, which our authors say were presumably written in Italian, and accordingly behold him always in the rather grave, unsympathetic mood, inseparable from the stately form of writing he had based upon ancient Roman models. But the genius of the man will not down. Subject as he was, and in all willingness, to the monastic ideals of religion, he nevertheless gave his intellect free rein in the domain of letters. Therein lies his significance as a pioneer of the Renaissance; therein lies his charm, even when he is most elaborately Latin. To observe in his letters the love he bore toward his favorite classics, the reverence with which he interrogated them, the enthusiasm with which he read and wrote, is to feel that one is in the presence of as open a mind, as candid a temperament, as ever turned the acquirements of scholarship to the enrichment of daily life.

There is among his epistles a captivating description of his absorption in his library, and the uselessness of attempting to lure him from its joys. He is writing to the Abbot of St. Benigno, and he says: "One of my very dearest friends, seeing that I was almost done for with my immoderate toil, suddenly asked me to grant him a very simple favor. Although I was unaware of the nature of his request, I could not refuse one who I knew would ask nothing except in the friendliest spirit. He thereupon demanded the key of my cabinet. I gave it to him, wondering what he would do, when he proceeded to gather together and lock up carefully all my books and writing materials. Then, turning away, he prescribed ten days of rest, and ordered me, in view of my promise, neither to read nor write during that time. I saw his trick; to him I now seemed to be resting, although in reality I felt as if I were bound hand and foot. That day passed wearily, seeming as long as a year. The next day I had a headache from morning till night. The third day dawned, and I began to feel the first signs of fever, when my friend returned, and seeing my plight gave me back my keys. I quickly recovered, and perceiving that I lived on work, as he expressed it, he never repeated his request." It is the Petrarch of this human and intensely modern letter, rather than the Petrarch of the contemptuous references to the Italian tongue, whom we must remember if we are to see the man in a correct perspective. His classical enthusiasms must be weighed not as pedantries but as—enthusiasms. It was his love of letters that made him the friend of kings. Boccaccio, practising in the vernacular, regretted keenly Petrarch's exclusive devotion to Latin, especially as he knew from the "Canzoniere" the mastery of his friend; but he revered the latter, just the same, as the most luminous intelligence of his time. In a letter describing his audience with Charles IV, he tells, with quaint complacency, how he presented the monarch with some ancient Roman coins, saying: "Behold Cæsar, those whose successor you are, those whom you should admire and emulate, and with whose image you may well compare your own." He then proceeded to give an outline of the great events in the lives of the rulers represented on the coins, "adding such words as might stimulate his courage and his desire to emulate their conduct." The Emperor, Petrarch tells us, exhibited great delight. Were his forbearance and sympathy vouchsafed to the monitor or to the man of letters? We doubt not that they were given to the man of letters.

Professor Robinson and Professor Rolfe sketch with clearness and animation the life of their subject, and their translations from the correspondence are woven most effectively into the survey of the various special phases of Petrarch's activity. They show him in his attitude toward literature in general, and in his relations with his literary contemporaries. They show him on his travels, and they traverse his political and religious opinions. In every one of their chapters they hold fast to their broad conception of Petrarch as a man to whom books were a profound happiness, and who, by communicating his fresh thoughts and emotions to many of the best minds of his time, fostered a more thorough and more flexible love of literature, and facilitated that efflorescence of the human spirit which we call the Renaissance. The book is a work of sound scholarship, destined to be of practical service to the student, and it has the lighter qualities which will commend its learning to the general reader.

THE NEW DUMAS ROMANCES.

From The London Sketch.

The two romances are written on four hundred sheets of paper, on both sides, with very few corrections. This either proves the manuscript to be fair copy, or, more probably, that it was never subjected to revision. The manuscripts belong to M. Stylianos Apostolides, a Greek gentleman who has survived his wife, a daughter of the late Sir Orford Gordon, by some years. Being excessively benevolent, as well as erudite, he presented three public libraries to various towns in Cyprus, and was on the point of consigning the present romances to the same distant obscurity. A sarcastic remark by a gentleman at Larnaca on the illegibility of the manuscript made M. Apostolides wonder if this literary treasure would be duly valued in Cyprus. He ultimately withdrew it from the collection, and took the work to Paris, where it was pronounced genuine by both the publishers and the surviving relatives of the elder Dumas. But, as the French law of copyright would leave but a small percentage on such a publication to the owner, M. Apostolides determined to produce it in an English edition—probably at his own expense.

The title of the volume containing the two romances is not yet determined, but both stories strike quite new ground, so far as the range of first class fiction is concerned. The scene is in the territory of Daghestan, chiefly in the vicinity of Derbend, which is a port on the Caspian Sea. With his usual comprehensive grasp and mastery of detail, Dumas affords a remarkable picture of the manners and customs of the races in the Caucasus. Vivid and eloquent descriptions of scenery are given with a curious imitation of Oriental dilateriness which lends a characteristic touch to the tales. Exciting incidents are by no means lacking. Combats and treachery, the love of a man for a maid, and a variety of adventures, often of a breathless nature, lend internal proof that the hand of the famous French writer had not lost its cunning when these tales were penned. Contrast is afforded by the appearance of Russian officers, and Dumas does not forget to introduce historical personages, which he himself used to declare gave verisimilitude to a narrative.

The manuscript has been consigned to Mr. Home Gordon for translation, and it is in his possession at the present time. Mr. Gordon, who is the only son of Sir Home Seton Gordon, of Embo—one of the oldest Nova Scotian baronetcies—was educated at Eton, practises journalism, has Parliamentary ambitions on the Tory side, is an enthusiast about Wagner and cricket, while he has strong views on modern painting, and has translated several books from the French. In 1897 he married the youngest daughter of the late Mr. Leeson-Marshall, of Callinafercy, County Kerry. She has greatly assisted him in the present translation.

FICTION.

A CONFLICT OF CONVENTION AND INDIVIDUALITY.

ADRIAN ROME. A Contemporary Portrait. By Ernest Dowson and Arthur Moore. 12mo, pp. 342. Henry Holt & co.

THE BUSHWHACKERS AND OTHER STORIES. By Charles Egbert Craddock. 16mo, pp. 312. Herbert S. Stone & Co.

THE JAMESONS. By Mary E. Wilkins. 16mo, pp. 177. Doubleday & McClure Co. Curtis Publishing Company.

The hero of "Adrian Rome" is far from being a hero in the customary sense of the term. He is an orphan with a large inheritance of wealth and a sufficient amount of inherited temperament, artistic and morbid. The instinct of his youth tells him to marry the country girl he loves. Convention bids him go forth alone into the fashionable world to which he belongs, and there find the kind of wife with which his equals would expect him to be provided. Had he not had the gift of authorship Adrian Rome might not only have acquiesced in this arrangement, but would have found happiness in it. His fashionable wife not sympathizing wholly with his literary ambitions, however, his thoughts revert to Sylvia, the innocent maiden of his school days, and from this combination of a natural impulse with the recrudescence of a family idiosyncracy the tragic finale of the story flows. It is not a bad story, as latter day stories go, and it is told with some skill, a certain amount of which would appear to have sprung from close study of Mr. James. At the same time the authors lack the power to make their characters altogether plausible. Perhaps it is because they are not fitted to collaborate, and in trying to help one another only diminish the effect for which both are striving. We suspect, though, that the fault is more serious. There is an Oxford don in the book who is always mentioned as a person of brilliant wit. The things he is made to say are abysmally dull. Thus Adrian Rome is described as a most unconventional and even charming man; one is constantly expecting him to be interesting; but he is never quite realized; he remains always a shadowy figure compact of words, not of flesh and blood. The novel is just good enough in intention to make the reader wish it had been executed more from the inside of things, by collaborators of greater capacities than Mr. Dowson and Mr. Moore.

Miss Murfree falters only when she leaves her favorite environment and personages. The last of her three stories, "The Exploit of Chocolah, the Chicksaw," is of very doubtful value. The action is dated from the middle of the last century. It does not excite the emotions by a hair's breadth. On the other hand, "The Bushwhackers" and "The Panther of Jolton's Ridge" are capital pictures of types and scenes which the author thoroughly knows, and the episodes celebrated in both stories are as lifelike as they are dramatic. Of course there is dialect, and, equally of course, the pictorial motive is a little overdone. Miss Murfree loves her mountain scenery so well that she does not always know when to stop talking about it. But her narrative gift remains unimpaired, and she wreaks it on two themes that are undeniably attractive.

The author of "The Jamesons" has so often packed so much within a little space that we are surprised at the tenuity of a book by her running to a hundred and seventy-seven pages. In spite of the many chapters there is very little told. What little there is, however, is not without a pleasing quality. To the village in which the scene is laid there come the Jamesons, a family of enough importance in the world to feel that it is justified in approaching its new neighbors with a lofty air. Circumstances wear off the strangeness in time, and friendship takes the place of misunderstanding. The story of the evolutionary process is set down in Miss Wilkins's accustomed admirable manner. Now and then a touch of fun is introduced, as when the Jamesons are reported as refusing to buy the cows offered to them because they haven't any upper teeth. The humor is more than ordinarily obvious. So also is the sentiment.

HOROSCOPES.

Translated by Nora Hopper from the French of François Coppée.

Before the sibyl with her haunted eyes
Two sisters sat with delicate arms enlaced;
Watched as she dealt the cards, and, without haste,
Spelt out the rune of their two destinies.

Brown haired and gold haired, fresher than the dawn
Poppy and white anemone were they,
A flower of autumn and a flower of May;
They watched to see their fates from darkness drawn.

"Life will be sad for you and yours, heigho!"
The sibyl told the autumn colored maid.
"But will my lover love me?" "Ay," she said.
"Why, then, I shall be all too happy so."

"With earthly love you never shall be fed,"
The sibyl told the lady white as snow.
"But shall I love at all?" "Ay, even so."
"Then happy I shall live and die," she said.

LITERARY NOTES.

Ibsen, it is reported, is finishing a new drama, and is thinking of writing his memoirs.

Miss Katharine Prescott Wormeley, the translator of Balzac's novels, is at work upon a translation of the letters to Mme. Hanska, the lady who, in the last year of his life, became Balzac's wife.

John Oliver Hobbes's forthcoming novel—a sequel to "The School for Saints"—is to be called "Robert Orange," after the character who, at the end of the former work, was left in the position of an innocent bigamist.

The new German Copyright bill, which the Reichstag is to act upon early next year, provides for the better protection of the copyright of daily newspapers and of literature generally. No paper will be permitted to reprint articles without stating the source, or to reproduce a scientific article from a journal without the special permission of the author. Reproduction of the news of the day will be permitted on the source being acknowledged. The copyright of musical works will be extended from thirty to fifty years.

Mrs. Hugh Fraser has written a new novel, the scene of which is laid in Italy. She intends to call it "The Splendid Porsenna." Those who enjoyed "Palladia" will be keenly interested in this announcement.

The one idea of the scholar is amusingly illustrated in a story told in the just published memoir of R. H. Quick, the English teacher: "Apropos of Nonnius (a fifth rate Latin author), I heard a good story of Robinson Ellis. Shortly after the war of 1870 a man told Ellis that he had just come from Sedan. 'Have you, indeed?' said Ellis. 'That's very interesting. The first edition of Nonnius Marcellus was published at Sedan.'"

Miss Sarah Orne Jewett is preparing to publish two new books, "The Queen's Twin, and Other Stories," and "Betty Leicester's English Christmas."

The relation of popularity to merit in literature is the subject of an interesting article in "The Saturday Review." "If we take popularity as the index of literary merit," says that journal, "the greatest literary works produced in England during the present century we shall find to be Mrs. Wood's 'East Lynne' and the 'Proverbial Philosophy' of Mr. Tupper; whilst infinitely below the level of the worst 'shilling shocker' which ever contrived to pay the expenses of its publication we must place the degraded drivellings of Walter Savage Landor. The most ardent advocates of popularity as an index of literary merit will hardly press their theory to such a length as this. No one capable of forming a serious opinion on the matter will deny that Landor, the sale of whose works was—and we believe is still—so limited, was, within his own limits, one of the most perfect masters of the English language which our literature has ever known, that his sentences have the classical beauty of cameos; and that his pathos, his poetry, his pregnant wisdom, and sometimes his wit, are worthy of his matchless style. This recognition of Landor's excellence is not the recognition of a clique. It represents the judgment to which men of the most diverse interests, tastes and temperaments inevitably and unanimously arrive, under the influence of literary culture. They may not all like him, but inevitably they all admire him. As to the 'Proverbial Philosophy,' on the other hand, which once evoked the reverential delight of millions, there is hardly to-day a reader, however defective his taste, his mind and his education, who would not cast it aside with just, even if with unreasoning, ridicule."

Reducing popularity to a true test of merit, "The Saturday" begins by confining the rule to the greatest of works only, and recognizes the fact that a public made up of a hundred thousand readers, to which successive generations have contributed ten thousand each, has a literary weight beyond all comparison greater than a public of a million readers contributed by a few years and never augmented by any of the years succeeding. "Whilst the number of times a book is read gives little indication of its merit, the number of times which it is reread is a test of the most valuable kind, and ten men who read a book ten times over form a weightier public than two hundred men who devour it eagerly once and never feel a temptation to open its pages afterward."

Sir Henry Thompson is just bringing out a third and revised edition of his work on "Modern Cremation"—a book which gives the history of the practice of cremation up to the present time.

Mr. F. C. Penfield, formerly Consul General at Cairo, has written a book on "Present Day Egypt," which the Century Company will publish. It is to be carefully illustrated.

The same publishers announce an illustrated edition of Dr. Weir Mitchell's "Hugh Wynne," which is to contain reproductions of rare prints and MSS., and various drawings by Howard Pyle.

An English version of M. Frederic Masson's recently published book on the Empress Josephine is to be brought out in the autumn. It is an uncommonly attractive volume, the author having had access to many hitherto unpublished documents which throw much light on the life of Josephine.

Mme. Sarah Grand expects to finish her new novel within the next three months. So conscientious is she about her work that she has already written the first dozen chapters of this story three times over.

Mark Twain is taking a tour with his family in Sweden and Norway. Mr. Gilbert Parker, who has thrown himself with enthusiasm into the literary life of London, is just now seeking recovery from malaria at Carlsbad.

Mr. Bret Harte has written a new story which he calls "The Belle of Canada City." It will not appear before next Christmas.

The latest anecdote about Mr. Kipling represents him as being taken by Mr. Hardy to see a house which the latter thought might suit him. When Mr. Kipling moved out of earshot Mr. Hardy observed to the occupant, "I may mention to you that this gentleman is no other than Mr. Rudyard Kipling." "Is that so?" she replied, "I never heard the name before." Presently Mr. Kipling, in turn, found himself alone with the lady, and remarked, "Possibly you may not be aware that the gentleman who